

What People Are Saying About HAA

Let's Get Fundamental

The New York Times

By David Broder, September 4, 2009

NYT columnist David Broder says we need fundamental change and says the Wyden-Bennett bill is a comprehensive way to make that happen. Broder writes:

If I had a magic hour with the president, I'd tell him this is his ninth-inning chance. He can stay on the current path. He might be able to pass some incremental bill that extends coverage. But he won't have tackled the fundamental problems that first drove him to this issue. He won't have cut health care inflation. He won't have prevented a voracious system from bankrupting the nation, defunding the schools, pushing down wages and impoverishing the young.

On the other hand, he can shift back to the core issue: the perverse incentives that make this system such a mess. He can embrace proposals—like the Brookings proposals or, more comprehensively, the Wyden-Bennett bill—that address the structural problems instead of simply papering over them... This is not the time to get incremental. It's the time to get fundamental. Reform the incentives. Make consumers accountable for spending. Make price information transparent. Reward health care, not health services. Do what you set out to do. Bring change.

Real Choice? It's Off Limits in Health Bills

The New York Times

By David Leonhardt, August 26, 2009

The only bill introduced in Congress with "real choice" is the Healthy Americans Act. David Leonhardt writes:

Real choice is not part of the bills moving through the Democratic-led Congress; even if the much-debated government-run insurance plan was created, it would not be available to most people who already have coverage. The best-known proposal for giving people more choice is the Wyden-Bennett bill. The immediate advantage would be that people could choose a plan that fit their own preferences, rather than having to accept a plan chosen by human resources. You would be able to carry your plan from one job to the next—or hold onto it if you found yourself unemployed. You would never have to switch doctors because your employer switched insurance plans. The longer-term advantage would be that health insurance would become fully subject to the brutal and wonderful forces of the market. Insurers that offered better plans—plans that drew on places like the Mayo Clinic to offer good, lower-cost care—

would win more customers.

A Market for Health Reform

The Washington Post

By Ezra Klein, July 29, 2009

Based on the principles of the Healthy Americans Act, Ron Wyden believes there is a way to open more choices for all Americans with the Free Choice Act. Ezra Klein writes:

[The Free Choice Act] would open the exchanges to all Americans and all businesses. It would also let those of us with employer-based insurance take the money our employers are paying for our insurance and use it on the exchange instead. This idea wouldn't take away what anyone has. But it would allow those of us who don't like what we have to change it. More so than any other idea in the health-care debate, it offers a concrete way that reform could benefit the insured. It gives them a way out of a health-care system that is eating through their wages and limiting their choices. And that's no small gain. The only way that health-care reform will truly give us a more efficient, more effective, more affordable health-care system is if it begins to fundamentally change the inefficient, ineffective, unaffordable system we have now. The strength of the health insurance exchanges is the key to that transition. That is not to underplay the political or policy challenges. Change is scary. But it's what Obama promised, and it's what the health-care system needs.

A Bipartisan Plan on Health Care? Try Two

The Washington Post

By Ruth Marcus, July 29, 2009

President Obama has repeatedly stated that he wants a bipartisan plan that works for everyone. The Healthy Americans Act is already bipartisan and it's Ruth Marcus's preferred choice. Ruth Marcus writes:

If only Democrats and Republicans could get together and produce a health-care bill that would expand coverage and control costs. But wait -- there is such a proposal. In fact, there are two.

The first, which would, in a more perfect world, be my preference, is the measure devised by the odd couple of the Senate... This bill not only has the merit of being demonstrably bipartisan but has been scored by the Congressional Budget Office as fully paid for. These would be huge changes, which may be why, despite its sponsors' indefatigable efforts, the proposal hasn't gotten traction.

Something for Nothing

The New York Times

By David Brooks, June 23, 2009

Columnist David Brooks writes on the merits of the Healthy Americans Act and why some in Congress are slow to follow suit.

On May 12, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on health care reform… Democratic Senator Ron Wyden piped up and noted that he and Republican Senator Robert Bennett have a plan that repeals the [tax] exemption and provides universal coverage. The Wyden-Bennett bill has 14 bipartisan co-sponsors and the Congressional Budget Office has found that it would be revenue-neutral... Now you might think that in these circumstances someone might take a second look at the ideas incorporated in the Wyden-Bennett plan, which already has a good C.B.O. score, bipartisan support and a recipe for fundamental reform. If you did think that, you are mistaking the Senate for a rational organism. For while there are brewing efforts to incorporate a few Wyden-Bennett ideas, there is stiff resistance to the aspects that fundamentally change incentives.

Wyden's Third Way

The Wall Street Journal

By Collin Levy, June 22, 2009

Senator Ron Wyden is interviewed on HAA and explains why he thinks it may be the most viable health care option. Collin Levy writes:

The idea, Mr. Wyden says, is to harness the Democratic desire to get everyone covered to the Republican interest in markets and consumer choice. "The most conservative Republicans accept the idea that they didn't accept in '93, that you've got to cover everybody to organize the market," [Wyden] says…. The Healthy Americans Act transitions poor people out of Medicaid and will give them choices of private plans like members of Congress….

Mr. Wyden has been meeting with the president on the issue, so is Mr. Obama committed to the public option, I wonder? Mr. Wyden won't tell, but directs me instead to review Mr. Obama's book, "The Audacity of Hope." In it, he says, "he talked about a system like what we're talking about in the Healthy Americans Act."

The 'Rock' In Health Reform

The Washington Post

By David S. Broder, June 11, 2009

A bipartisan health care bill already exists thanks to Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Bob Bennett. Will the President ever consider the bill? David Broder writes:

Their bill -- in the simplest terms -- would have guaranteed portable, affordable health insurance to every American...Most remarkably, the sponsors obtained an estimate from the Congressional Budget Office and independent auditors that their plan would be self-financing after a short transition period and might save a trillion dollars over 10 years. The time may come -- either before or after the House votes on its bill -- when Obama may have to demonstrate his flexibility on the issue of a government-run option. Wyden and Bennett are potential allies if he removes what Bennett calls "the rock" blocking a bipartisan bill. And the president couldn't wish for better partners.